



Earth shattered global heat record in '23 and it's flirting with warming limit

By **SETH BORENSTEIN**
AP Science Writer

Earth last year shattered global annual heat records, flirted with the world's agreed-upon warming threshold and showed more signs of a feverish planet, the European climate agency said Tuesday.

The European climate agency Copernicus said the year was 1.48 degrees Celsius (2.66 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial times. That's barely below the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit that the world hoped to stay within in the 2015 Paris climate accord to avoid the most severe effects of warming. And January 2024 is on track to be so warm that for the first time a 12-month period will exceed the 1.5-degree threshold, Copernicus Deputy Director Samantha Burgess said.



The cracked earth of the Sau reservoir is visible north of Barcelona, Spain, March 20, 2023.

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Earth shattered global heat record in '23 and it's flirting with warming limit

Continued from Front

Scientists have repeatedly said that Earth would need to average 1.5 degrees of warming over two or three decades to be a technical breach of the threshold.

The 1.5 degree goal "has to be (kept) alive because lives are at risk and choices have to be made," Burgess said. "And these choices don't impact you and I but they impact our children and our grandchildren."

The record heat made life miserable and sometimes deadly in Europe, North America, China and many other places last year. But scientists say a warming climate is also to blame for more extreme weather events, like the lengthy drought that devastated the Horn of Africa, the torrential downpours that wiped out dams and killed thousands in Libya and the Canada wildfires that fouled the air from North America to Europe.

In a separate Tuesday press event, international climate scientists who calculate global warming's role in extreme weather, the group's leader, Imperial College climate scientist Friederike Otto said "we definitely see in our analysis the strong impact of it being the hottest year."

The World Weather Attribution team only looks at events that affect at least 1 million people or kill more than 100 people. But Otto said her team was overwhelmed with more than 160 of those in 2023, and could only conduct 14 studies, many of them on killer heat waves. "Basically every heat wave that is occurring today has been made more likely and is hotter because of human-induced climate change," she said.

The United States lurched through 28 weather disasters last year that caused at least \$1 billion in damage, smashing the old record of 22 set in 2020, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced Tuesday. The number of these costly disasters, which are adjusted to account for inflation, has soared, averaging only three per year in the 1980s and just under six



New York City is visible in a haze-filled sky due to wildfires in Canada, photographed from the Staten Island Ferry, Wednesday, June 7, 2023, in New York.

per year in the 1990s.

The U.S. billion-dollar disasters last year included a drought, four floods, 19 severe storms, 2 hurricanes, a wildfire and a winter storm. They combined to kill 492 people and cause nearly \$93 billion in damage, according to NOAA.

Antarctic sea ice hit record low levels in 2023 and broke eight monthly records for low sea ice, Copernicus reported.

Copernicus calculated that the global average temperature for 2023 was about one-sixth of a degree Celsius (0.3 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than the old record set in 2016. While that seems a small amount in global record-keeping, it's an exceptionally large margin for the new record, Burgess said. Earth's average temperature for 2023 was 14.98 degrees Celsius (58.96 degrees Fahrenheit), Copernicus calculated.

"It was record-breaking for seven months. We had the warmest June, July, August, September, October, November, December," Burgess said. "It wasn't just a season or a month that was exceptional. It was exceptional for over half the year." There are several factors

that made 2023 the warmest year on record, but by far the biggest factor was the ever-increasing amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that trap heat, Burgess said. Those gases come from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas. Other factors including the natural El Nino — a temporary warming of the central Pacific that alters weather worldwide — other natural oscillations in the Arctic, southern and Indian oceans, increased solar activity and the 2022 eruption of an undersea volcano that sent water vapor into the atmosphere, Burgess said.

Malte Meinshausen, a University of Melbourne climate scientist, said about 1.3 degrees Celsius of the warming comes from greenhouse gases, with another 0.1 degrees Celsius from El Nino and the rest being smaller causes.

Copernicus records only go back to 1940 and are based on a combination of observations and forecast models. Other groups, including the United States' National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and NASA, the United Kingdom's Meteorological Office and Ber-

keley Earth go back to the mid-1800s and will announce their calculations for 2023 on Friday, with expectations of record-breaking marks.

The Japanese Meteorological Agency, which uses similar techniques as Copernicus and goes back to 1948, late last month estimated that it was the warmest year at 1.47 degrees Celsius (2.64 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels. The University of Alabama Huntsville global dataset, which uses satellite measurements rather than ground data and dates to 1979, last week also found it the hottest year on record, but not by as much. Though actual observations only date back less than two centuries, several scientists say evidence from tree rings and ice cores suggest this is the warmest the Earth has been in more than 100,000 years.

"It basically means that our cities, our roads, our monuments, our farms, in practice all human activities never had to cope with the climate this warm," Copernicus Director Carlo Buontempo said at a Tuesday press conference. "There were simply no cities, no books, agriculture or domesticated animals on

this planet the last time the temperature was so high." For the first time, Copernicus recorded a day where the world averaged at least 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) more than pre-industrial times. It happened twice and narrowly missed a third day around Christmas, Burgess said.

And for the first time, every day of the year was at least one degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than pre-industrial times. For nearly half the year — 173 days — the world was 1.5 degrees warmer than the mid-1800s.

Meinshausen, the Australian climate scientist, said it's natural for the public to wonder whether the 1.5-degree target is lost. He said it's important for people to keep trying to rein in warming.

"We are not abolishing a speed limit, because somebody exceeded the speed limit," he said. "We double our efforts to step on the brakes."

But Buontempo said it's only going to get hotter: "Following the current trajectory in a few years time the record-breaking year of 2023 will probably be remembered as a cold year." □

Associated Press

NRA lawyer says gun rights group is defendant and victim at civil trial over leader's big spending

By MICHAEL R. SISAK
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A National Rifle Association lawyer acknowledged in court Tuesday that some former executives and outside vendors may have ripped off the influential gun rights group with lavish spending and self-dealing.

But, in an opening statement at a New York civil trial scrutinizing the organization's leadership and finances, Sarah Rogers questioned why the NRA is being forced to defend itself when it's also a victim and could end up reaping millions of dollars in restitution.

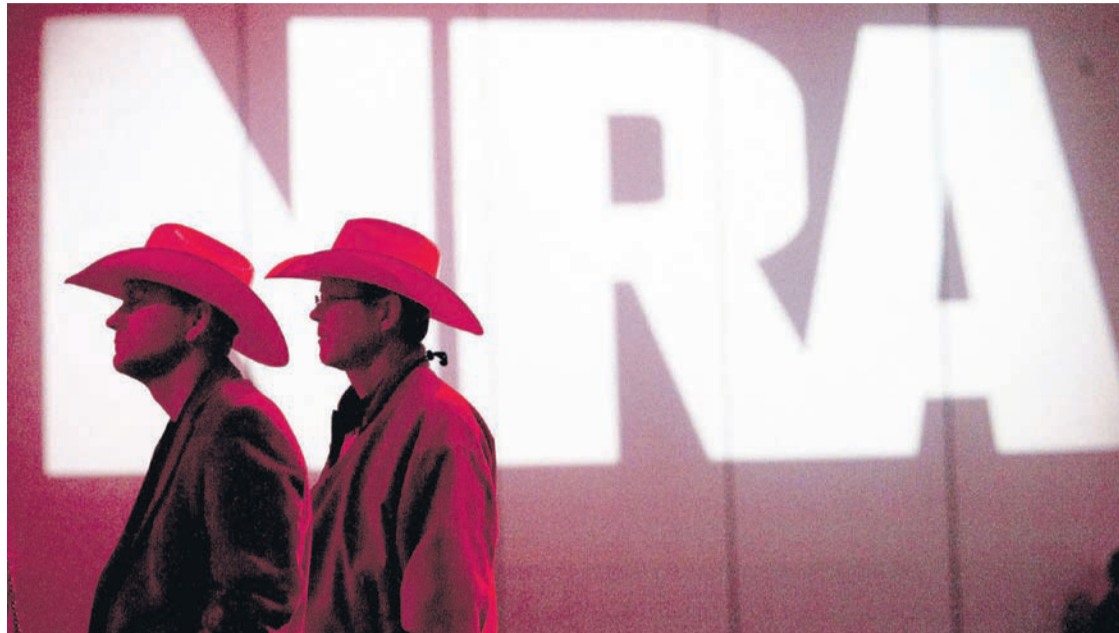
"There can be no question that some individuals, some executives, an ad agency, a travel agent betrayed (the NRA's) mission," Rogers told jurors in the first of several opening statements by lawyers representing the NRA and defendants including its longtime head, Wayne LaPierre, who is resigning Jan. 31.

"The one question is: Why the NRA, the victim, is a defendant in this case?" Rogers asked.

New York Attorney General Letitia James sued the NRA, LaPierre and two of his top lieutenants, in 2020, accusing them of violating the trust of the nonprofit charity's 5 million members by spending tens of millions of dollars raised through dues and other means on extravagant, unnecessary expenses.

One quirk of the case is that while the NRA is a defendant, the Democratic attorney general is seeking punishment that includes requiring that LaPierre and the two other men pay the organization back.

LaPierre's lawyer, P. Kent Correll, defended the executive vice president and chief executive officer as having served the NRA "well and honorably and honestly for 44 years," the last three decades as its head. Correll justified LaPierre's expenses as vital to



National Rifle Association members listen to speakers during the NRA's Annual Meetings and Exhibits at the George R. Brown Convention Center, May 4, 2013, in Houston.

Associated Press

his job promoting the organization's gun-rights agenda. LaPierre has repaid some bills to comply with organization guidelines and tax laws, Correll said.

"He saw his duty as broader than sitting in an office at NRA headquarters reviewing contracts and invoices," Correll told jurors, portraying him as something of a politician crisscrossing the country for chicken dinners with gun owners and retreats with Hollywood celebrities he wanted to court as organization allies.

LaPierre, 74, is accused of charging the organization more than \$11 million for private jet flights despite the NRA's policy of only covering the cost of coach-class airfare. Correll said the charter flights were a security requirement because he was receiving death threats and that others in the organization, including the late actor and former NRA president Charlton Heston, flew on private jets. Rogers said LaPierre paid the NRA for the cost of travel for family members who accompanied him on trips.

LaPierre is also accused of taking lucrative gifts from people doing business with the NRA, including trips to Bahamas, Greece, Dubai and India and stays on a

108-foot (33-meter) yacht from a marketing firm that had \$135 million in contracts with the NRA. To avoid scrutiny, state lawyers said, LaPierre routed expenses through a vendor, filed doctored invoices, and retaliated against insiders who questioned his spending. A lawyer for a co-defendant, former NRA Chief Financial Officer Wilson Phillips, said LaPierre's full travel plans weren't listed on internal records because there was "a real and legitimate concern" that a leak could jeopardize his safety.

LaPierre is expected to testify, possibly as early as this week, along with Lt. Col. □

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Firefighters investigate cause of suspected gas explosion at historic Texas hotel that injured 21

By **JAMIE STENGLE** and **JAKE BLEIBERG**

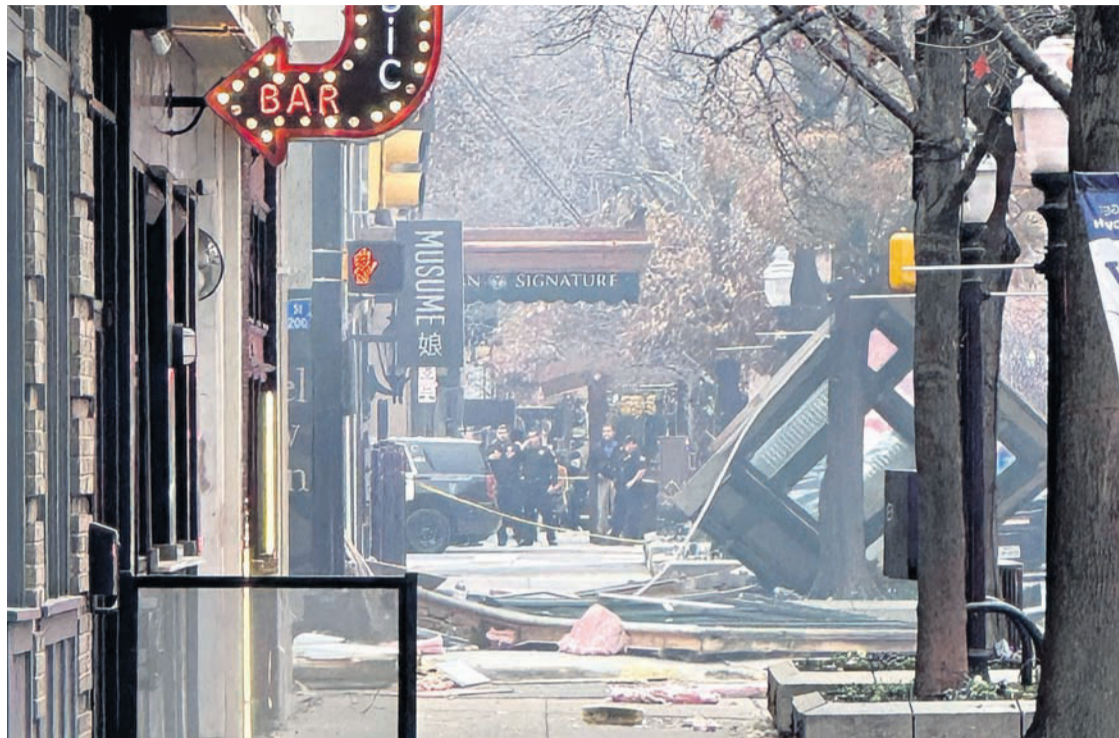
Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP)

— Firefighters scoured the wreckage of a historic Fort Worth hotel on Tuesday as they investigated the cause of a massive explosion that shattered windows, littered the streets with debris and injured 21 people, including one critically.

The Monday blast blew doors and sections of wall into the road in front of the 20-story downtown Sandman Signature Hotel, where authorities said rescuers found several people trapped in the basement. By evening, officials said everyone seemed to have been accounted for, but firefighters with dogs continued searching the rubble overnight.

The fire department is working with state and federal investigators and utility workers to determine the exact cause of the explosion, though authorities believe a gas leak was to blame. The department said Tuesday that no more victims had been found and that the area around hotel would remain closed. Fifteen people who were hurt in the mid-afternoon blast were taken to hospi-



Debris is seen outside the Sandman Signature hotel on Houston Street in downtown Fort Worth, Texas, after an explosion, Monday, Jan. 8, 2024.

tals, including one who was in critical condition and six others whose conditions were described as “semi-critical” by MedStar, which provides ambulances and emergency medical services in Fort Worth. Officials said more than two dozen rooms were occupied at the hotel when the explosion happened.

“There was debris. There was insulation. There was office furniture,” said Charlie Collier, a 31-year-old

who was was working nearby when he said he saw a large flash and what sounded like thunder.

“Everything that was in the first couple floors of the building was blown out all over the street,” he said.

The hotel is in a busy area of downtown about a block from the Fort Worth Convention Center. Footage from news helicopters showed firefighters picking their way through the piles of drywall, shattered glass

and mangled metal that lay scattered across the street and over parked vehicles. There were gaping holes visible in the ground. Craig Trojacek, a fire department spokesman, said a restaurant in the building had been under construction but that it hasn't been determined that the blast occurred there. Authorities have not specified the cause of the suspected gas leak. Rebecca Martinez was in a nearby building

Monday when she recalled hearing a loud crack and seeing a wall of dust and debris sweep through the streets. Stepping outside, she came upon a man and woman leaning against a fire hydrant. “The man was all bloody, his face was all bloody,” Martinez said. “Then I started smelling natural gas, real intense and I thought, ‘I might need to get away from here.’”

Moments later, she said, authorities evacuated her building and some of the surrounding neighborhood. Paula Snider, a UPS driver, was doing a pickup nearby when she said she heard a loud boom and saw a huge puff of black smoke. A large piece of metal grating landed under her truck and another dropped nearby. “I jumped out and took off running,” she said. Trojacek said the chaotic scene made it impossible for rescuers to reach parts of the building immediately after the blast.

“We had reports of people trapped down in the basement, and because of the explosion that took place, some of those access areas were either covered up or it didn't feel safe at that point to get people down into,” he said. □

Associated Press

LGBTQ+ advocates' lawsuit says Louisiana transgender care ban violates the state constitution

By **KEVIN MCGILL**

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP)

— A lawsuit to block enforcement of Louisiana's new ban on transgender health care procedures for anyone under 18 was announced Monday by LGBTQ+ advocates.

The lawsuit was prepared by Lambda Legal and others on behalf of five Louisiana minors and their parents, identified in the filings by pseudonyms. Lambda Legal said in a news release the lawsuit was being filed in Louisiana district

court in New Orleans.

State lawmakers approved the ban last year and overrode a veto by then-Gov. John Bel Edwards, a Democrat. The law bans, among other things, hormone treatments, gender reassignment surgery or puberty-blocking drugs for minors and took effect Jan. 1, making Louisiana one of 22 states banning or restricting such transgender care.

The lawsuit in New Orleans is one of several state and federal court challenges to those laws. A federal judge in Arkansas struck down

that state's ban last June but other challenges have resulted in rulings allowing enforcement. The ACLU has taken a challenge to Kentucky and Tennessee bans to the Supreme Court. The Louisiana lawsuit argues that the law violates the state constitution's right to privacy provision by imposing burdens on parents' and individuals' ability to make personal medical decisions. It seeks a judicial declaration that the law is unconstitutional and a court order blocking its enforcement. □



The Louisiana Capitol stands prominently, April 4, 2023, in Baton Rouge, La.

Associated Press

As Bosnian Serbs mark controversial national day, U.S. warns celebration amounts to 'criminal offense'

By RADUL RADOVANOVIC
Associated Press

BANJA LUKA, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) —

The United States warned on Tuesday that ongoing celebrations of a Bosnian Serb self-proclaimed national holiday — which included a parade of paramilitary and police troops — were in violation of Bosnia's constitution and a 1995 peace agreement, and as such amounted to a criminal offense.

In a statement, the U.S. embassy in Sarajevo urged Bosnia's legal authorities to "investigate any violations of law" related to the marking of Jan. 9 as the day of the Republika Srpska entity, which is what the part of Bosnia run by ethnic Serbs is called.

"The issue is not the celebration of the holiday, but rather the decision to do so on January 9," the statement said.

The Jan. 9 holiday commemorates the day in 1992 when Bosnian Serbs declared the creation of their own state in Bosnia, igniting the country's devastating four-year war that killed



Members of the police forces of the Republic of Srpska march during a parade marking the 32nd anniversary of the Republic of Srpska, in the Bosnian town of Banja Luka, 240 kms northwest of Sarajevo, Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024.

more than 100,000 people. Bosnia's Constitutional Court has ruled against celebrating on that date in the past.

Bosnian Serbs defied both the court and international criticism, staging a parade of troops armed with machine guns, armored vehicles and other equipment.

Also participating was the Russian Night Wolves biker group, known for its support for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Nationalist Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik, a Kremlin ally, said the Serbs won't give up "the day when Republika Srpska was born." The Russian ambas-

sador in Bosnia was among the rare foreign officials who attended the gathering in the northwestern town of Banja Luka.

"We are looking at Serbia, we are looking at Russia," Dodik said in his speech. He added that the holiday cannot be banned because "it would mean we

Associated Press

have fallen."

During the war, Bosnian Serbs expelled and killed Bosniaks, who are mostly Muslims, and Croats from the territories they controlled.

The conflict ended in 1995 in a U.S.-brokered peace agreement. The so-called Dayton accords created Serb and Bosniak-Croat entities in Bosnia, held together by weak joint central institutions.

Bosnian Serbs, however, have sought to gain as much independence as possible. Dodik has openly called for secession from Bosnia, defying U.S. and British sanctions imposed over his policies.

On Monday, two U.S. fighter jets flew over Bosnia in a demonstration of support for the Balkan country's territorial integrity.

In Brussels, European Commission spokesman Peter Stano insisted on the "need to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, constitutional order, including decisions by the Constitutional Court, by all actors in Bosnia-Herzegovina." □

A U.S. citizen has been arrested in Moscow on drug charges

MOSCOW (AP) — A U.S. citizen has been arrested on drug charges in Russia, officials said Tuesday, a move that comes amid soaring Russia-U.S. tensions over Ukraine.

The arrest of Robert Woodland Romanov was reported by the press service of the Moscow courts. It said the Ostankino District Court ruled on Saturday to keep him in custody for two months on charges of preparing to get involved in illegal drug trafficking pending an official investigation. It didn't offer any details of the accusations.

The U.S. State Department said it was aware of reports of the recent detention of a U.S. citizen and noted that it "has no greater priority than the safety and security of U.S. citizens overseas," but refrained from further

comment, citing privacy considerations. The U.S. Embassy in Moscow issued a similar statement.

Russian media noted that the name of the accused matches that of a U.S. citizen interviewed by the

popular daily Komsomolskaya Pravda in 2020.

In the interview, the man said that he was born in the Perm region in the Ural Mountains in 1991 and adopted by an American couple when he was two.



Robert Woodland Romanov speaks to a journalist during his interview with Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper in Moscow, Russia, on Dec. 2020.

Associated Press

He said that he traveled to Russia to find his Russian mother and eventually met her in a TV show in Moscow. The man told Komsomolskaya Pravda that he liked living in Russia and decided to move there. The newspaper reported that he settled in the town of Dolgoprudny just outside Moscow and was working as an English teacher at a local school.

The news about the arrest come as Washington has sought to win the release of jailed Americans Paul Whelan and Evan Gershkovich. The State Department said last month that it had put multiple offers on the table, but they had been rejected by the Russian government.

Gershkovich, a Wall Street Journal reporter, was detained in March while on

a reporting trip to the Russian city of Yekaterinburg, about 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles) east of Moscow. He has remained behind bars ever since on espionage accusations that he and the Journal have denied. The U.S. government has declared him to be wrongfully detained.

Whelan, a corporate security executive from Michigan, has been jailed in Russia since his December 2018 arrest on espionage-related charges that both he and the U.S. government dispute.

He was sentenced to 16 years in prison.

Analysts have pointed out that Moscow could be using jailed Americans as bargaining chips amid U.S.-Russian tensions that soared when Russia sent troops into Ukraine. □

Gabriel Attal is France's youngest-ever and first openly gay prime minister

By SYLVIE CORBET
Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France saw its youngest-ever prime minister and first openly gay one named Tuesday as President Emmanuel Macron seeks a fresh start for the rest of his term amid growing political pressure from the far right.

Gabriel Attal, 34, rose to prominence as the government spokesperson then education minister and had polled as the most popular minister in the outgoing government.

His predecessor Elisabeth Borne resigned Monday following political turmoil over an immigration law that strengthens the government's ability to deport foreigners.

Macron will work with Attal to name a new government in the coming days, though some key ministers are expected to stay on.

"I know I can count on your energy and your commitment," Macron posted on X in a message to Attal. The president made a reference to Attal reviving the "spirit of 2017," when Macron shook up politics and



Newly named Education Minister Gabriel Attal arrives to attend the weekly cabinet meeting after a cabinet reshuffle, Friday, July 21, 2023 at the Elysee Palace in Paris.

Associated Press

shot to a surprise victory as France's youngest-ever president on a pro-business centrist platform aimed at reviving one of the world's biggest economies.

During the handover ceremony, Attal said: "I could read and hear it: the youngest president of the Republic in history appoints the youngest prime minister in history.

I want to see it only as the symbol of boldness and movement. It is also, and perhaps above all, a symbol of confidence in young people."

Attal said his goals include making security an "absolute priority" and promoting values of "authority and respect of others." He also vowed to strengthen public services including schools

and the health system and push for "better controlling immigration."

Macron, 46, has shifted rightward on security and migration issues since his election, notably as far-right rival Marine Le Pen and her anti-immigration, anti-Islam National Rally have gained political influence.

The president's second

term lasts until 2027, and he is constitutionally barred from a third consecutive term. Political observers have suggested that Macron, a staunch supporter of European integration, wants his new government to prepare for June's European Union elections, where far-right, anti-EU populists are expected to increase their influence.

Critics from both left and right took aim at Attal for his limited experience, his Paris upbringing seen as out of touch with people struggling in the provinces, and his loyalty to the president.

Le Pen posted on X: "What can the French expect from this 4th prime minister and 5th government in 7 years (under Macron)? Nothing," calling on voters instead to choose her party in the European elections.

In a statement, Eric Ciotti, head of the conservative party The Republicans, said, "France urgently needs action: it needs a different approach."

The Republicans would remain a "responsible opposition" to the centrist government, he added. □

Suspected militants kill 2 police officers assigned to protect polio workers in northwest Pakistan

By RIAZ KHAN
Associated Press

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — Suspected militants shot and killed two police of-

ficers assigned to escort polio workers in northwest Pakistan on Tuesday, the second such attack in the past 24 hours on officers

taking part in a nationwide anti-polio drive.

The latest attack happened in Bannu, a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan, said Altaf Khan, a local police chief. Another two officers were also wounded in the attack.

Khan said police have launched a search in the area to trace the assailants, and one of the attackers was apparently at a house in Bannu.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for Tuesday's attack in Bannu. Tuesday's attack came hours after authorities said an officer who was critically wounded in a roadside bombing that targeted po-

lice assigned to protect polio vaccination workers in northwestern Pakistan died in a hospital, raising the death toll from the attack, claimed by the Pakistani Taliban, to seven.

Police said in a statement that at least three officers remained in critical condition after Monday's bombing in the district of Mamund, a former stronghold of the Pakistani Taliban in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan. The Pakistani Taliban promptly claimed responsibility for the attack. However, a competing claim late on Monday by the Islamic State group accused the Pakistani Taliban of falsely taking responsibility for the

bombing. In the past, the two militant groups which are both active in the region have issued competing claims.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are the only countries in the world where polio remains endemic.

Monday's bombing in Mamund happened after the government began another round of its regular vaccination drives. Islamic militants often target polio teams and police assigned to protect them, claiming falsely that the vaccination campaigns are a Western conspiracy to sterilize children. The vaccination drive in Mamund was suspended for a second day Tuesday. □



A health worker administers a polio vaccine to a child at a neighbourhood of Karachi, Pakistan, Monday, Jan. 8, 2024.

Associated Press

Today is going to be a good day

(Oranjestad)—Here's why: Aruba Today collected some things to do BEYOND the beach. Yes, we know. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. Let's mention some of these hidden gems.

Nature Calls



The Arikok National park is worth the ride. We love the hikes that are guided by the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the historical sites tell you about the island's indigenous roots. The guided tours are even free of charge. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In Total the park consists of 7907 acres protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whiptail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero) and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these close in the park's Visitors' Center. For more information, visit the website www.arubanationalpark.org

Philip's Animal Garden



To stay with the animals, let's hop to an amazing place. Something different to do, an experience that is to be enjoyed by people of all ages. Welcome to Philip's Animal Garden. We are not talking about a zoo here, this is actually a sanctuary for all types of creatures, from

horses to peacocks, kangaroos to turtles, monkeys, goats, and many, many more different species. The place was founded in 2009 and it is the only organization rescuing and rehabilitating exotic animals in Aruba, which has resulted in an amazing collection of these animals. They provide a suitable living environment for all the rescued animals. Up until now the owner, Philip, has built this shelter with his own efforts; building all the cages from scratch, designing all structures and welding them with his own bare hands. His goal is to upgrade the facilities to a world-class animal shelter with veterinary care and round-the-clock staffs. With the input from the Aruban community and visitors they provide the best care for these animals. Please check out their website for more information: www.philipsanimalgarden.com.

The Lighthouse



No, you would not think of this as a hidden gem. The California Lighthouse is actually one of the most known highlights in Aruba and many repeated guests most probably took the ride uphill already. But, there is a significant change to this tower. Since September 2016 you can climb the top. In 2015 Stichting Monumentenfonds started the restoration of the California Lighthouse. The project finished in September 2016 and the Lighthouse is now open for visitors to enjoy the beautiful view from the top. The construction of the California Lighthouse started in 1915. The name 'California' came from a vessel of the West India Company and Pacific Steamship Co. called 'California' that shipwrecked in the area in 1891. Therefore they came up with the idea of building a lighthouse that could indicate the island's eastern tip to ships with its light. www.arubalighthouse.com will give you more information.

Kayak in the Mangroves



Mangel Halto at Savaneta is definitely a place not to miss out on. The beautiful beach with the natural mangroves is simply a beauty, but if you

are into a more active way to enjoy the nature: take a kayak. While you are doing some workout -as it might get a little windy and rough-, you will see the island from a different perspective. You can even make a stop to do some snorkeling at the reef. Its fun, it's healthy and for sure something else. There are several companies that offer kayak tours, we had good experience with The Shack Kayak Tours Aruba, find them on Facebook.

Take an "off-road" sightseeing tour



A must-do activity on the island is for sure taking an off-road sightseeing tour. If you have a rented car, you can drive through the north-eastern side of Aruba and explore the natural pools, caves, rock formations and gorgeous view of the Atlantic Ocean. To access most of these sights, like the natural pool (Conchi) and the Guadirikiri and Fontein caves, you must enter through the Arikok National Park and buy a day pass. Then you drive up the rugged road that leads you through the white dunes, caves and along the wind turbines. Other locations, like the Ayo and Casibari Rock formation are situated more in the center of the island, and are free for guests, 24 hours a day.

Go for a shopping spree in the city center



Need a new bathing suit? Head to the city center of Oranjestad, where there is countless of different stores—both high end and more affordable—that can offer you the service you deserve! Local shopping stores often offer a more affordable price, and have a variety of clothes, shoes, bathing suites, purses and more. Along the Royal Plaza strip, there are numerous jewelry stores with great quality jewelry. In the Renaissance mall, you can shop high-end luxury brands, like Dolce & Gabbana, Kate Spade, Louis Vuitton and more.

Around the high-rise hotel area near Palm Beach, the Paseo Herencia Mall contain a variety of shopping stores, restaurants, small food stands and even a movie theater! ☐

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and if needed, all with wheelchair access. As of September 2019, Chogogo Tours has upgraded its services for disabled or less-mobile visitors, offering rental beach wheelchairs and expanding our wheelchair-accessible tour options.

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Aruba's Nature is to be Cherished

ST. CRUZ — The national park Arikok comprises almost 18% of the island. Its rugged terrain, desert-like hills filled with tall cacti, breathtaking coastline and protected local flora and fauna welcome you to be explored. There is numerous wildlife to discover like for example the sea turtle who lays his eggs on the park's beaches. There are more places on the island that are a preserved area like the Bubali Plas which is a bird sanctuary.

The national park Arikok takes you on a memorable journey of the islands past offering unique geological, cultural

and historical sites. These can all be enjoyed and explored either on your own or during guided tours. A wide variety of educational and informative programs and fun activities is available.

Did you know that four of the in total seven species of sea turtle lay their eggs on Aruba's beaches? In the national park, a Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*) keeps a strict eye on a very special event taking place below on the beach: a majestic Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) heads back to sea after laying her eggs, while another nest laid 2 months ago by the same female hatches. A very rare

occurrence of daytime nesting and hatching. Sea turtles prefer nesting in the cool and dark hours of the night. And hatchlings usually wait for the cue of cooling surface sand before emerging.

Bubali Magic

This beautiful close-up image of the pink bird is courtesy of Michiel Oversteegen of the Aruba Birdlife Conservation. This important foundation showcases and builds awareness of Aruba's birds and other native flora and fauna. You may have seen a 'pink cloud' lately at the Bubali or Spanish Lagoon Wetlands areas? It's most likely to be Roseate Spoonbills (*Ajaia ajaja*) or

'Chucharon Cora' as they are known in Papiamentu. This unusual looking bird forages in shallow muddy water while sweeping its flattened bill from side to side to catch small fish, crustaceans and other aquatic invertebrates. The Roseate Spoonbill remains an uncommon sight as they are vulnerable to degradation of feeding and nesting habitats (Wetlands). (Source: arikok national park)

The aforementioned is just a part of what Aruba's nature has to offer. We cannot stress enough to go, see for yourself. The island has the most beautiful beaches but it is also worthwhile to go beyond this

and get an idea of our entire island. Lately there is a discussion going on about the effect certain activities have on our nature, for example the ATV vehicles cause a lot of dust, noise and leave tire tracks. Animals live in these areas where the vehicles run, often with high speed and with detrimental consequences to flora and fauna. Motorized vehicles are forbidden to drive on the sand dunes in the Northern part of the island and all beaches in Aruba are forbidden for any motorized vehicle. Treasure our island to enjoy it like you do: as a tropical and natural paradise. We truly appreciate it! □

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Another Treasure of Aruba's Beaches: Sea Glass!

NOORD - It is hard to imagine this happening today, but years ago people dumped all kinds of refuse straight into the ocean, including old cars, and their household garbage, which of course included lots of glass. Over the next 30 years the pounding waves cleaned the beach, by breaking down everything but glass and pottery. The pounding waves washed the trash up and down, back and forth. Tons of polished, broken glass pieces were created by the pounding surf. These smoothed, colored glass particles then settled along the sea shore in millions, and that is why you can find these beautiful and colorful pieces on the north shore beaches of Aruba.



Especially on the strip on white sand between the famous "Natural Bridge" and the huge red anchor close to "Grapefield" beach you will be able to find your own pieces of sea glass. The sea glass that was created is the product of a very long and interesting process. It can take anywhere from 10 to 30 years to make sea glass. The name for any piece of glass that finds its

way to the ocean and tumbles around in the water long enough is "Sea glass.

The colorful pieces of glass are being used for decoration, handcrafts and jewelry!

Once glass makes its way into the ocean, the glass is broken up into shards and is tumbled around in the water, where sand and other rocks act like sandpaper to smooth out its rough edges. Sometimes as the sea glass is passed through fire, it becomes fire glass, the rarest of sea glass with certain inclusions, just like precious gems.

For years, the water beat against the different kinds of trash being dumped. Glass, household appliances and even motor parts were discarded on the beach. The waves and weather conditions wore down the overwhelming amount of garbage in the water, creating millions of beautiful smooth rocks.

It's hard to believe the short-sighted mistakes we were making that could have potentially ruined these beautiful beaches. But thanks to natural processes, the ocean transformed the trash into the sea glass.

Each colored gem on the beach has its own story.

The ruby red glass stones are typically from old car tail-lights.

Then, the sapphire rocks are the remnants of broken apothecary bottles. The most common and the easiest to find are the brown (Amstel & Polar

beer), green (Heineken & Balashi beer) and clear glass which are the soft much loved "soft drink" bottles.

If you like to see the sea glass for yourself, and be in awe of the power of nature, rent a car or jeep and go explore our deserted beaches on the north side of the island. Make it a fun family day!

Even if we didn't mean to pollute the Beaches how we did, it is inspiring to see just how the earth can correct our mistakes.

Funny, how trash can change into treasures!

Everybody knows that you are not allowed to take local shells home, but the people working at the airport have no problem you taking sea glass home. A few of those pieces make great souvenirs. You can place them in a wine glass or large bottle for decoration and every time you look at it a smile will light up your face thinking back of your unforgettable Aruba vacation! ☐



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Mangrove oysters

Episode CCXXXVII - 237

Each week, Etnia Nativa presents a new episode about cultural heritage, focusing on native knowledge, transcendental wisdom, and the importance of defending the true heart of Aruba. It connects the reader to that mystical aspect of the island's culture and traditions, encouraging everyone to interact with our unique environment.

During this episode, we will have it regarding Aruban oysters, which used to be part of a small island industry in the olden days.

The mangroves form a green barrier on the south coast of our island-transitional vegetation from land to sea that offers great protection and forms a unique ecosystem in its own right. These topics were explained in previous episodes (III-3 and CXXV-128).

Despite the importance of mangroves as ecosystems and for the survival of certain communities around the world, in the last four decades, thousands of hectares of mangroves have been lost due to human actions such as deforestation, the changing climate, and industrial toxic waste waters.

The thickets of roots created by mangroves provide a natural barrier against the slings and arrows of extreme climate phenomena, allowing hundreds of families to subsist on what thrives in those forests- for example, the tradition of artisanal fishing in some places. If mangroves disappeared, it would be the end of the subsistence of many coastal regions around the world in which they are a source of life and biodiversity.

In the mangrove reserves, you can also collect mangrove oysters, which provide an important source of nutrition and income for many cultures. This practice used to be part of a small but very successful Aruban industry at the beginning of the 19th century. Unfortunately, it did not prosper since, at that time, the wood provided by the mangrove was way more important than the oysters that lived on its roots. Mangrove wood was used in the construction of forts in Curacao, and the mangroves where oysters grew were especially



suitable for the burning of lime. Mangroves were not only cut down to be burned for the building of forts but also to erect towns and cities following European standards. Therefore, many of our Aruban mangrove trees were cut down, reducing the growing production of oysters drastically.

If this small industry had not been destroyed and if it had been well cared for, it could have kept its good source of profit both then and now. At that time, it was a very famous industry since our harvested oysters tasted way better and were much larger than those from Curacao and the rest of the Caribbean islands.

Large quantities of oysters grew among the roots of the mangroves and could be seen even at the bottom of the sea from branches hanging in the water. Only a few branches needed to be

cut or lifted to obtain an abundant supply of oysters.

The number of shells they collected depended on the tide and the time they spent in the mangroves (generally five to six hours a day). After filling their baskets one shell at a time, they cleaned their catch and were ready to market. Although collecting mangrove oysters is not an easy task since you must immerse yourself in the mud up to your waist, looking for them between the cracks, and also being very alert to insect bites, getting trapped between the roots, and being bitten by certain animals like snakes that are hidden among the tree branches and roots, mangrove oysters continue to be a source of income for many different coastal communities around the world. The disappearance of mangroves would be the end of life in coastal regions that totally depend on them.



So if you are interested in really getting to know all about your travel destination: the flora, fauna, geology, history, and autochthonous art, as well as the true identity of the island, book a visit to Etnia Nativa, a unique native gem! Let Anthony, our newspaper's acclaimed cultural columnist, guide and lecture you regarding the most interesting and revealing stories about Aruba's undiscovered native ethnicity, an adventure beyond beaches and tourist traps. Visit his magnificent dwelling that integrates natural and reused materials, bursting with culture and island heritage, and you'll love our island beyond beaches!

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Don't forget to visit Aruba's famous Red Anchor

At the south east coast of the island, standing alone on a windswept and barren land stands a popular Aruba landmark – a large anchor. It overlooks the sea just beyond, watching over the shipping lanes. It stands there in memory and in honor of all seamen who have lost their life at sea.

Where to Find the Anchor?

The anchor is a “must see” landmark when you visit Aruba. It is among the most photographed historical landmarks for the island. You want to make sure you add this stop on your itinerary when your visiting the south coast of Aruba. The bright red anchor against the backdrop of the deep blue Caribbean sea and the azure blue skies, make a great backdrop for your vacation pictures.

The anchor is located at the entrance to Gate 6 to the former Lago Colony. It is on the outskirts of Seroe Colorado, on the south east point of the island at the “T” junction to Baby Beach.

Depending on where you are staying on the island, follow the signs that indicate the way to Baby Beach. Once you reach the T-junction, it will be right in front of you.

About the Anchor

Size
It will be hard to miss the anchor, it's huge! The anchor that weighs 21,772 kilos, is approximately 10 feet 6 inches wide and 15 feet, 6 inches tall.

On the anchor there are some numbers. The 4112 and 4115, which are believed to be the serial numbers that refer to the “fluke” or horizontal and vertical parts of the anchor, respectively. The number 21772K refers to the weight of the anchor in kilos.

This type of anchor was manufactured by Hoesch Dortmund Horde, at a foundry located in Germany.

Where did the Anchor Come From?

There are a number of stories as to the origins of the anchor, which one do you think it was? (Unfortunately the mystery has never been solved, so your imagination can pick which one you think it might be!)

Story 1:

“According to Mr. Manuel M. Curiel, an ex-Lago Tug Captain, a fully laden VLCC (Very Large Crude Carrier) was seeking a mooring at the 15-mile anchorage, known as Bara, on the southern part of



The Red Anchor situated at the entrance of former Lago Colony in San Nicolas

the island. This is the usual shallow mooring location for ships awaiting orders, etc. The weather was rough with strong current. The normal procedure is that they would walk out three shackles (about 90 feet) until the anchor touches the bottom while the chain must rest on the bottom. Subsequently, they will walk out some extra shackles and when the ship starts to swing or lean on one side, the anchor is properly set. Because of the rough weather, unfortunately they did not get the time to walk out the extra tackles and because of the tension exerted on the winch, it broke, and they lost the anchor and its chain.”

Story 2:

“Mr. Curiel also said that at one time a small tanker with a Korean crew, while lifting their anchor also lifted another anchor near the inner harbor. When the ship asked for assistance, he went with his tugboat along with a barge, to help. But eventually they had to cut the chain and let the anchor go to the bottom because they could not untangle them.”

How Did The Anchor Become a Landmark?

Sometime between 1980 and 1985, three gentlemen (Mr. Wim Martinus – the Harbormaster of Aruba;

Mr. August Genser – the ex-Division Superintendent of Lago's Laboratory; and Mr. Willie Davis – Owner of Filtec at Zeewijk in San Nicolas), were having a conversation with Mr. Charlie Brouns Jr. at his famous Charlie's Bar and Restaurant in San Nicolas. Charlie, who was a visionary and had dreams for developing the San Nicolas area, told these gentlemen that he would like to come up with something innovative for the San Nicolas area to draw tourism to the area.

The “anchor”, which at that time was being stored at the Oranjestad harbor, was suggested as an option. Charlie liked the idea! He then contacted the President of Lago for permission to acquire the anchor. He was granted permission and the anchor was then relocated to its present location and dedicated “To All Seamen” on the occasion of the closing of the Lago Oil Refinery on March 31, 1985.

Through the Years

Through the years the Anchor was slowly weathering from the wind and salt. As time passed, sadly the origin and purpose of the anchor slowly faded away from people's memories.

After Charles Brouns Jr died on September 15, 2004, his friend Mr. Sam

Speziale, requested assistance from the management of Valero Aruba Refinery to help maintain the monument. The Valero Aruba Refinery, graciously sandblasted and painted the anchor and poured a concrete pad around it. On April 17, 2005, the anchor monument was rededicated “To All Seamen” in a formal ceremony in memory of Charles Brouns Jr.

Today, the anchor stands both as memorial to all seaman who have lost their lives at sea, but also as a silent reminder that Seroe Colorado is part of San Nicolas and that San Nicolas is still a vibrant and important part of the island of Aruba.

The Best Time to Visit

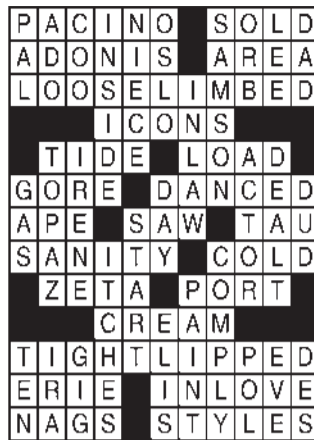
When your planning your visit to the south end of the island, you will want to include in your itinerary the many things to see and do there. The anchor will be just one of these stops, (keep an eye out for our future editions, we publish our recommendations!).

With that being said, I have to say, if you enjoy catching a sunrise, the anchor is one of the best places on the island to catch the sunrise. But in reality, anytime is a good time to visit, depending on your personal schedule. □

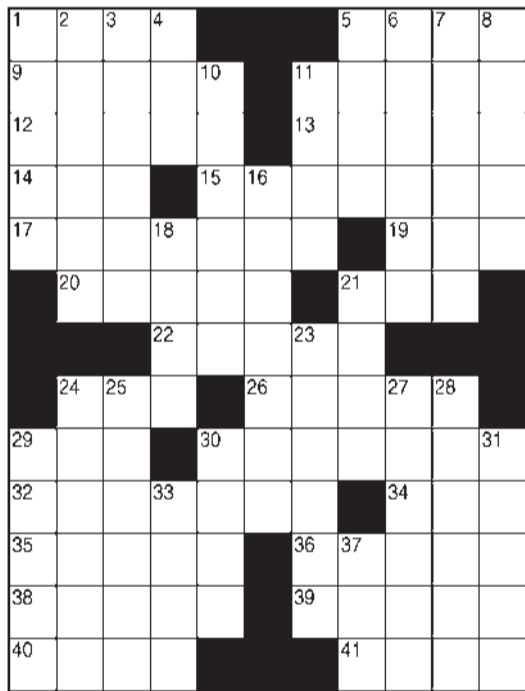
CROSSWORD

By **THOMAS JOSEPH**

- ACROSS**
- 1 Tibia's place
 - 5 River floater
 - 9 Stately home
 - 11 Circus worker
 - 12 Texas mission
 - 13 Atlanta school
 - 14 Force member
 - 15 Paging gizmos
 - 17 Things to hang on to
 - 19 Stake
 - 20 Put away
 - 21 Was inactive
 - 22 Map division
 - 24 Auction buy
 - 26 Painter Rivera
 - 29 Sermon topic
 - 30 "Golly!"
 - 32 Small tree frogs
 - 34 West of films
 - 35 Nostalgic song
- DOWN**
- 36 Come together
 - 38 "Message received"
 - 39 Longed
 - 40 Some sheep
 - 41 Tops
 - 1 Open-handed hit
 - 2 Luminous rings
 - 3 Sulking
 - 4 — de plume
 - 5 Highway exit
 - 6 One-celled organism
 - 7 Weasel's kin
 - 8 Secret meeting
 - 10 Inventor Fulton
 - 11 Casual tops
 - 16 Device for a book lover
 - 18 Fence part
 - 21 Ooze
 - 23 Occupies
 - 24 Keep out of sight
 - 25 Nervous
 - 27 Zodiac twins
 - 28 Made speeches
 - 29 Puffball bit
 - 30 Taunt
 - 31 Garden starters
 - 33 Diner desserts
 - 37 Zero



Yesterday's answer



AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

1-10 CRYPTOQUOTE

SBQ GIAGDNQ DL GADGWYWTHW
PN SD EWVQ DTQ NQS DL
GQDGUQ LDAYQS SBWS DSBQA
NQSN DL GQDGUQ WAQ BIEWT.

— WUHDIN BIOUQK
Yesterday's Cryptoquote: BE WILLING TO BE A BEGINNER EVERY SINGLE MORNING. — MEISTER ECKHART

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Casa Del Mar 2BR/2B:

Week 2/Unit1113 (21k);
Week 5/Unit1315 (23k);
Week 8/Unit1113 (19k);
Week 8/Unit1409 (19k);
Week 10/Unit1207 (19k);
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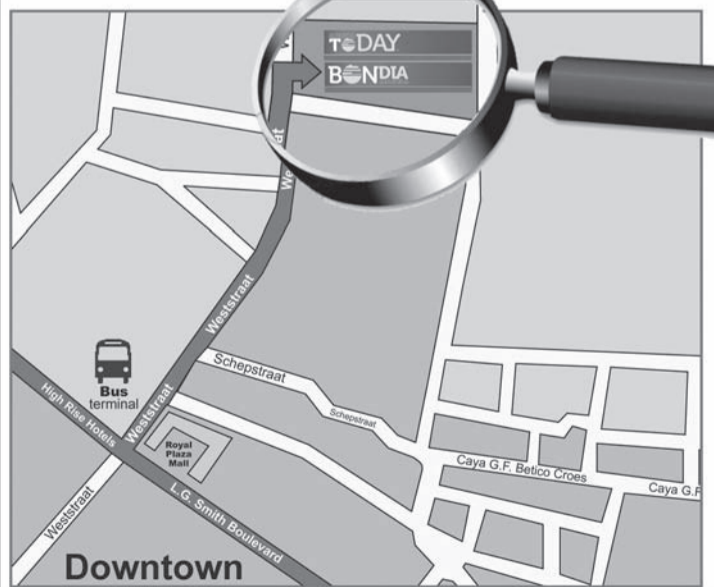
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Editor

Caribbean Speed Printers N.V.
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Acc. #23951903
RBC Royal Bank Acc. #1330772

Editors

Pilar Flores
Richard Brooks
Angenette Figuereo

Sales

Mark Gomes
Sulaika Croes

Classifieds

classified@cspnv.com

Distribution and Collection

accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website

Juan Luis Pinto

Weststraat 22
T: 582-7800

E: news@arubatoday.com

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Audacious Bible-era story 'The Book of Clarence' is maybe too audacious

By **MARK KENNEDY**
AP Entertainment Writer

Somewhere between the sacred and profane, comedy, drama and satire comes "The Book of Clarence," a retelling of The Greatest Story Ever Told that arrives in theaters appropriately between Christmas and Easter.

It's a remarkably idiosyncratic approach by rising auteur Jeymes Samuel, who for this Biblical-era tale is director, producer, writer and composer for only his second feature. You have to kind of hand it to him: Who else would have the audacity to tackle Jesus in your second outing?

"The Book of Clarence" with a stunning cast that includes LaKeith Stanfield, James McAvoy, Anna Diop, Benedict Cumberbatch, Alfre Woodard and David Oyelowo careens through tones and sentiment, silly in one and then horrific in another. Samuel says he wants viewers to have a "wicked good time" but really it's a bit of a muddled, unholy mess.

It is 33 AD in Jerusalem and Stanfield plays Clarence, a street hustler in robes who likes getting high in one cool, surreal scene he floats into the air like a balloon and dreams up schemes to get rich quick. He's got the hots for a local beauty but owes a ton of coins to that beauty's loansharking brother.



This image released by Sony Pictures shows Anna Diop, left, and LaKeith Stanfield in a scene from "The Book of Clarence."

Clarence is called the "village's mischief maker" and even his mother thinks he needs to get his act together. "I'm not a nobody," he tells his twin brother, Thomas (also Stanfield, naturally). "A man who lacks honor is a nobody," his brother replies. We know things are going to end painfully for Clarence because one of the first images in the movie is of him on a cross.

Clarence doesn't believe in God and certainly doesn't believe that the local guy named Jesus is capable of miracles. It's a scam to him. He tries to become a 13th apostle to pay off his debts.

When that fails he decides to pretend to be a messiah, too, and get paid for so-called tricks.

Samuel, whose previous movie was the all-Black Western "The Harder They Fall," has some creative ideas, like using a chariot race to honor both "Ben Hur" and "Fast & Furious," as well as wonderfully capturing the Last Supper like a painting come alive. He apes biblical epics in his title fonts and the opening and closing of the camera's iris. He mixes stilted language "I must make haste" with modern turns ("I've got the cobblestones

on lock.") This is the first Biblical epic to use the term "dumbass." But Samuel never stays with any idea for long and "The Book of Clarence" lacks cohesion, as well as consistency, even if the acting is superb, especially from a soulful Stanfield. Is Samuel honoring sword-and-sandal epics? Updating them? Mocking them? Looking at the Jesus story through a Black lens is immensely rewarding but the pay-off is poor. There are plenty of messiahs here like Spider-Mans in the multiverse but it is not clear what the filmmaker wants to say with them. A critique

Associated Press

of celebrity? A message about entertainment? That faith comes even to those who have none? That we kill all our saviors? It's not even clear if this is a pro- or anti-religious movie.

Samuel comments powerfully on us today when white Roman police stop-and-frisk Black Jerusalem residents, but then wastes such a great potential vein to mine with a swanky dance party and cool choreographed moves. He makes us shudder as nails are pounded into Clarence's flesh, yet also includes humor at the crucifixion from the actual guys doing the dying. He has a scene with brutal rock throwing and yet also a recurring goofy bit about light bulbs appearing over Clarence's head.

It's a mind-melting piece of filmmaking, having elements of both Monty Python's "Life of Brian" and "The Ten Commandments." (Fun fact, the Italian city of Matera stands in for Jerusalem here and was also where "The Passion of the Christ" was filmed.) Add to that an exciting soundtrack of more than a dozen songs by Samuel (even one with Jay-Z, also a producer on the movie) and "The Book of Clarence" is worth a look simply for its sheer daring. But we wouldn't go so far as to say its creator walks on water. □

Irish singer Sinead O'Connor died from natural causes, coroner says

LONDON (AP) — Irish singer-songwriter Sinéad O'Connor died from "natural causes" in July, a coroner said Tuesday.

London's Metropolitan Police had said the singer's death was not considered suspicious after she was found unresponsive at a home in southeast London on July 26. O'Connor was 56. The Southwark Coroner's Court confirmed that O'Connor died of natural causes, which means cir-

cumstances when an illness or condition is not linked to external forces. It did not provide details.

The singer, who began her career performing on the streets of Dublin, rose to worldwide fame with her cover of Prince's ballad "Nothing Compares 2 U," released in 1990.

O'Connor was public about her mental illness and was hospitalized after her teenage son, Shane, died by suicide in 2022.

A lifelong non-conformist, O'Connor was known for her outspoken political and cultural stances and fierce criticism of the Roman Catholic Church, long before allegations of sexual abuse in the clergy were widely reported.

Thousands of fans lined the streets of Bray, the Irish town she had called home, during a funeral procession in August. Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar attended, along with U2's Bono. □



Irish singer-songwriter Sinead O'Connor attends a press event during the Budapest Spring Festival at a hotel in Budapest, Hungary, on April 22, 2015.

Associated Press

What's next for Jim Harbaugh? Michigan coach faces decision on whether to stay or go back to NFL

By ERIC OLSON

AP College Football Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — Michigan's climb back to the summit of college football ended with its 34-13 win over Washington in the College Football Playoff championship game on Monday night.

Next, the Wolverines and their fans wait and see if Jim Harbaugh stays or goes.

Harbaugh, as he did during the lead-up to the championship, deflected all questions about his future an hour after the game and again Tuesday. But decision time is drawing near as NFL franchises begin or consider searching for new coaches.

"I just want to enjoy this. I hope you give me that. Can a guy have that?" Harbaugh said after the game. "Does it always have to be, 'What's next, what's the future?'"

Harbaugh looked into NFL jobs the last two years before deciding to stay at Michigan. It's possible he won't this time, especially



Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh and quarterback J.J. McCarthy celebrate with the trophy after their win against Washington in the national championship NCAA College Football Playoff game Monday, Jan. 8, 2024, in Houston.

Associated Press

with the school facing possible NCAA sanctions for recruiting violations and the sign-stealing scandal that hung over the team all season.

There is also the question of what's left to accom-

plish at Michigan for the 60-year-old Harbaugh. The "Michigan Man" did what he set out to do when he left the San Francisco 49ers in 2014 to return to Ann Arbor, where his father was an assistant under Bo

Schembechler and where he was a star quarterback in the mid-1980s.

Running back Blake Corum pointed out Harbaugh has been a winner at each of his coaching stops.

"So who wouldn't want

him?" Corum said. "When things come up like that, hey, you've got to do what's best for you. You have a great coach like that, everybody wants a piece of you."

Harbaugh took over a proud program humbled under Rich Rodriguez and Brady Hoke and has gone 89-25 over nine years, six with at least 10 wins. His only losing record came during the pandemic-shortened 2020 season.

The last three years mark one of the most dominant periods in the history of the only program to win more than 1,000 games. The Wolverines have gone 40-3, won three straight Big Ten championships, made three consecutive playoff appearances and now are national champions. Harbaugh's father, Jack, and NFL coach brother John watched his moment of triumph inside NRG Stadium. Harbaugh did divulge one of his future plans after the game. □

The pro tennis tours are trying to cut down on matches that stretch past midnight

By HOWARD FENDRICH

AP Tennis Writer

In their first coordinated efforts to cut back on late-night tennis, the women's and men's professional tours introduced new scheduling guidelines Tuesday that include preventing matches from starting after 11 p.m. except with approval and recommending a 6:30 p.m. start for night sessions at tournaments.

The WTA and ATP also announced that they are conducting what they called "a strategic review" to try to add more consistency to the kinds of tennis balls used starting in 2025, following complaints by players that the week-to-week changes in equipment are problematic and possibly causing more injuries.

It's the latest example of

the two tours working together.

"Match scheduling and tennis balls are both priority topics on our agenda, together with the WTA," ATP Chairman Andrea Gaudenzi said. "It's imperative that we evolve and adapt to the demands of the modern game, particularly where player health and fan experience are concerned."

The tours said the number of matches finishing after midnight "has risen considerably in recent years," prompting the rules about late sessions that go into effect this month at WTA and ATP events on a trial basis for this season.

Tennis, of course, is played without a clock, meaning matches can be shorter than an hour or stretch for hours on end. One recent

example: Andy Murray's second-round victory over Thanasi Kokkinakis at last year's Australian Open lasted more than 4 1/2 hours and concluded after 4 a.m. Grand Slam tournaments such as the Australian Open, which begins Sunday at Melbourne Park are not governed by the tours. But Tennis Australia says it was hoping to add some breathing room to its event's schedule this year and reduce the late-night play by starting competition a day earlier than usual Sunday instead of Monday and making the tournament 15 days instead of 14. The new scheduling guidance put forth by the tours on Tuesday includes allowing no more than five matches on any court each day after an 11 a.m. start, with three during a

day session and two in the evening; no matches starting after 11 p.m., unless a supervisor from one of the tours and tour management give the OK; any matches that haven't started by 10:30 p.m. must

be moved to a different court, so long as it's before 11 p.m.; night sessions can't begin after 7:30 p.m., and it's preferable that they should start an hour earlier than that. □



Andy Murray of Britain leaves Margaret Court Arena after 4 a.m. on Jan. 20, 2023, following his five set win over Australia's Thanasi Kokkinakis at the Australian Open tennis championships in Melbourne, Australia.

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More NFL teams could make coaching changes if they stumble early in the playoffs

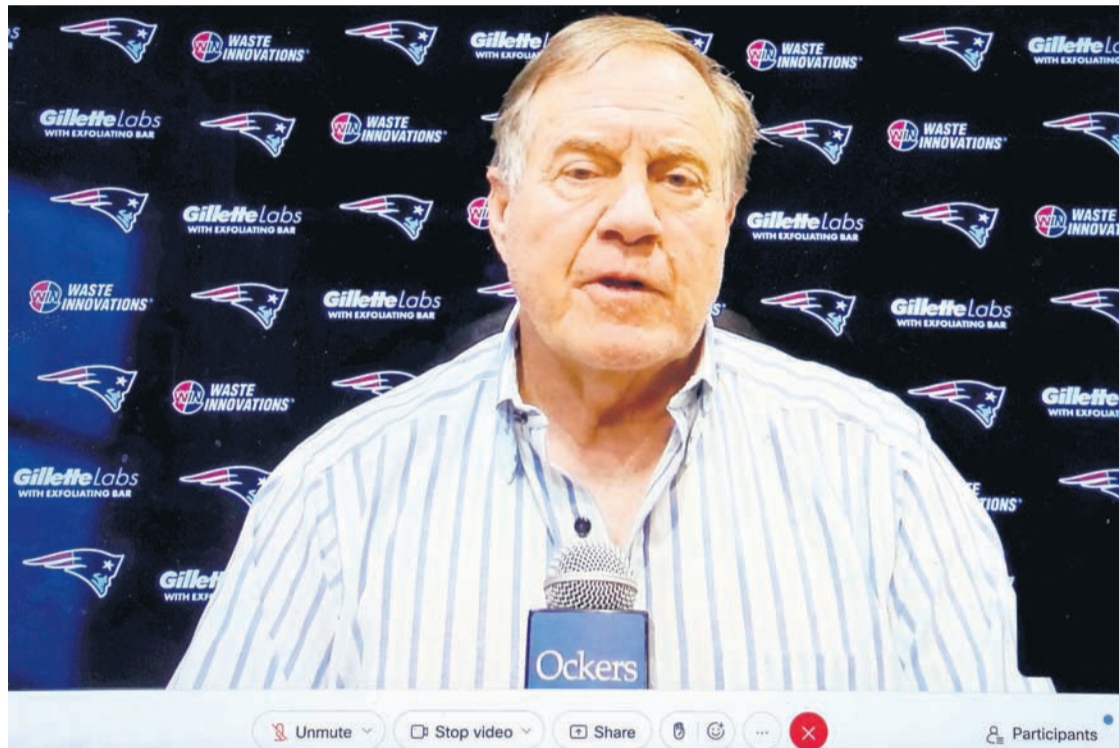
By **ROB MAADDI**
AP Pro Football Writer

It was a slow “Black Monday” across the NFL while everyone waits on Bill Belichick’s future with the New England Patriots.

The Washington Commanders, as expected, fired coach Ron Rivera after his fourth straight losing season.

The Carolina Panthers fired general manager Scott Fitterer after finishing an NFL-worst 2-15. The Atlanta Falcons didn’t even wait until Monday to fire Arthur Smith, releasing him late Sunday night, hours after a dismal 48-17 loss at New Orleans on a day that began with a division title still within grasp if Tampa Bay had lost.

The Commanders and Falcons join the Panthers, Raiders and Chargers in a search for a new head coach. Whether the Patriots join that list is the big



In a still frame from a Webex video news conference, in Foxborough, Mass., New England Patriots head coach Bill Belichick takes questions from reporters, Monday, Jan. 8, 2024.

Associated Press

question. Belichick just completed his worst season in 29 years as a head coach. The Patriots went 4-13 and missed the playoffs for the third time in the past four years. Belichick, of course, led New England to six Super Bowl titles during an unprecedented run of success across two decades before Tom Brady

left the team after the 2019 season. But the Patriots are just 29-38 since Brady left with only one playoff appearance in 2021. Mac Jones, who led them to a 10-7 season as a rookie, was benched for the final six games and it’s likely the team will pursue another quarterback in the offseason. New England owns the No. 3 pick in a QB-rich draft. Belichick will meet with owner Robert Kraft to discuss the team’s next steps and his. The 71-year-old coach confirmed Monday he’s under contract and is open to relinquishing full control of personnel decisions. Belichick is 27 wins away from passing Don Shula for No. 1 on the career list and is expected to pursue another coaching job if he doesn’t stay in New England. Several teams would be interested in a coach with his pedigree. □

Miami Marlins in agreement to hire Rachel Balkovec as director of player development, AP source says

By **ALANIS THAMES**
AP Sports Writer

MIAMI (AP) — The Miami Marlins are in agreement with Yankees minor league manager Rachel Balkovec to become their director of player development, according to a person familiar with the deal.

The person confirmed an MLB.com report of Balkovec’s hiring to The Associated Press on Tuesday on condition of anonymity because the team had not announced the deal.

Balkovec finished her second season as manager at Class A Tampa in September. She debuted with

the team in April 2022 with a win as the first woman to



Tampa Tarpons manager Rachel Balkovec watches from the dugout, while making her debut as a minor league manager of the Tarpons, a Class A affiliate of the New York Yankees, April 8, 2022, in Lakeland, Fla.

Associated Press

manage a Major League Baseball affiliate.

Before that, Balkovec was the first woman to serve as a full-time minor league strength and conditioning coach, then the first to be a full-time hitting coach in the minors with the Yankees. A former softball catcher at Creighton and New Mexico, Balkovec got her first job in professional baseball with the St. Louis Cardinals as a minor league strength and conditioning coach in 2012.

In 2016, Balkovec joined the Houston Astros, hired as the Latin American strength and conditioning coordi-

nator and later was the strength and conditioning coach at Double-A Corpus Christi. She joined the Yankees organization as a minor league hitting coach in 2019.

The Marlins have made a series of front office moves since the 2023 season ended.

A month after parting ways with general manager Kim Ng, who led the organization for three seasons, the Marlins hired former Rays GM Peter Bendix as their new president of baseball operations. Ng was the first woman to become GM of a major league team. □